

Opportunities & Constraints

Key

- Site boundary
- Proposed site access
- Pound Farm
- Ryder Avenue
- Existing vegetation and tree buffers
- Phase 1 - Potential Area for SEN School Site
- Phase 1 - Potential Area for Sports Facilities
- Phase 1 - Potential Area for 100no. New Homes
- Phase 2 - Potential Area for 130no. New Homes & Care Home
- Potential area for additional sports pitches
- Improved Bus Stop
- New Pegasus Crossing
- New Footpath Connection to new Pegasus crossing
- Potential overlooking
- Existing vehicular access
- Public bridleway
- Public Footpath
- Existing trees
- Landscape buffer
- Single storey buildings
- 2 storey buildings
- Allocated for development
- Direction of upward slope
- Green belt
- Surveyed contours



Opportunities

- Provide a new SEN school and sports facilities for community use
- Provide a total of 230 new homes across Phases 1 & 2 in a sustainable location, creating a natural extension of Ickleford contributing to the housing need, including 50% affordable housing
- Retain and enhance existing low-lying vegetation buffer and incorporate new trees on site, whilst allowing views of surrounding green open-space
- Ideal condition for Independent special school
- Provision of bus stops, Pegasus Crossing and connecting footpaths
- Provide a 65 bedroom residential care home (C2) to contribute to local need

Constraints

- Location of Pirton 021 Bridleway and Ickleford 016 Bridleway within the application site
- Southern part of the site is located within the Green Belt
- Potential overlooking of neighbouring residential properties, along southern boundaries
- Topography of the site to be carefully considered during the design process
- Views from the open countryside to be considered

Land at Pound Farm

Planning Policy



Planning and Design Policy Context

The proposals have been shaped by national, regional and local planning policy, including the National Planning Policy Framework and the North Hertfordshire Local Plan.

North Hertfordshire Local Plan (2011-2031)

The Local Plan identifies Ickleford as a Category A village, where limited, sustainable growth is supported within or adjoining the settlement boundary. The development responds to the Plan's strategic objectives by delivering high-quality, energy-efficient housing that reflects local character, enhances biodiversity, and provides safe pedestrian and vehicular connections.

The proposal also takes account of relevant policies on design (D1), landscape and biodiversity (NE1–NE4), heritage (HE1), and sustainable transport (T1) to ensure a contextually appropriate and environmentally responsible scheme.

Key policies applicable to the proposed development:

- **Policy SP2 – Settlement Hierarchy:**
Sets out the settlement hierarchy in North Herts.
- **Policy SP5 – Countryside & Green Belt:**
Land outside the defined settlement boundary remains Green Belt or rural area beyond the Green Belt — Will only permit development proposals in the green belt where they would not result in inappropriate development or where very special circumstances have been demonstrated.
- **Policy SP8 – Housing:**
Encourages high-quality, well-designed housing that meets local needs.
- **Policy SP9 – Design & Sustainability:**
Good design is considered to be a key aspect of sustainable development. Page 48 highlight how the scheme has been carefully designed in line with Policy SP9.
- **Policy D1 – Sustainable Design:**
Requires good layout, scale, and appearance, responding to local context and incorporating energy-efficient design.
- **Policy NE1–NE3 – Green Infrastructure & Landscape:**
Protects landscape character and key environmental assets; development at the village edge must include strong landscape buffers.
- **Policy NE4 – Biodiversity and Geological Sites:**
Development must deliver measurable biodiversity net gain and protect habitats and species.
- **Policy NE7 – Water Resources & Flood Risk:**
Requires SuDS and water-efficient design to manage runoff and prevent flooding.
- **Policy T1 – Sustainable Transport:**
Requires safe pedestrian and cycle links, minimal car dependence, and adequate parking provision.
- **Site Allocation IC3 (Bedford Road):**
Identifies land nearby for a new primary school; proposals adjacent must coordinate access, landscaping, and cumulative transport impacts.



North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031

Ickleford Neighbourhood Plan

The adopted Ickleford Neighbourhood Plan provides detailed local guidance, with particular emphasis on protecting rural character, supporting sustainable growth, and ensuring that new development reinforces the identity of the village.

The Neighbourhood Plan identifies the importance of high-quality design, integration with the existing settlement, and the creation of accessible open space. It places value on developments that are inclusive, sustainable, and distinctive, while also providing for a range of housing types and tenures.

The design approach described in this statement directly responds to these principles. The masterplan structure, landscape strategy and architectural language are each aligned with the objectives of both local and neighbourhood planning policy.

A full schedule of supporting reports, including transport, ecology, drainage, sustainability and heritage assessments, accompanies this application and provides further evidence of compliance with the relevant policy framework.

Key policies applicable to the proposed development:

Environment -

- **Policy E1: Maintaining Separation**
Requires the undeveloped gap between Ickleford and Hitchin (or the urban edge) to be respected. New development that encroaches visually or functionally on that gap should be refused unless justified.
- **Policy E2: Protecting the Landscape**
Requires protection/enhancement of the historic and natural landscape, including chalk streams, field ponds, mature trees and hedgerows. These features should be incorporated into landscape schemes.
- **Policy E3: Rural Character**
Requires that development, appropriate to its scale and location, respects the village's rural character — topography, sky-lines, spacing around buildings, views of countryside etc.
- **Policy E4: Biodiversity**
New development must protect and enhance existing natural features / habitats, and deliver at least 10% net gain in biodiversity; connect to wildlife corridors; use native species etc.

Sustainable Development -

- **Policy SD3: High Quality Design**
Proposals must follow the INP's Design Codes; must relate to existing patterns in street and spaces, be appropriate in scale/density, use appropriate materials; no more than 2 storeys unless context warrants; car parking integrated within landscaping; cycle storage; SuDS etc.
- **Policy SD4: Provision of Energy Efficient Buildings**
New buildings (and retrofits) should aim for high sustainable design and construction standards; sitting/orientation for passive gain; use of renewables; double glazing, insulation etc.
- **Policy SD5: Water Management**
Development proposals should follow best practice water efficiency – water-efficient fittings, harvesting, grey water recycling; per-dwelling consumption not exceeding 110 litres/person/day.

Community -

- **Policy C1: Community Facilities**
Supports new community facilities or improvement of existing provided design respects village character; protects key facilities (village hall, store, pubs, etc.) from loss unless replaced/equivalent.
- **Policy C2: Recreation and Green Spaces**
Identifies key open spaces which must be protected from development. Reduction in quality/quantity only allowed if equivalent or better replacement is provided.
- **Policy C3: Primary School and Site at Bedford Road**
If a school is proposed on the Local Plan's allocation (IC3) the development must satisfy specific criteria (transport assessment, green routes, etc.).

Movement, Traffic & Transport -

- **Policy MTT1: Provision for Pedestrians, Cyclists and Horse-riders**
New development should enhance existing pedestrian/cycle routes, connect into them, design new roads and junctions to be safe, keep traffic speeds low, provide foot/cycle links, respond to village heritage context.
- **Policy MTT2: Car Parking**
Development proposals must not result in loss of publicly accessible off-street parking; new development should provide off-road parking.

Policy SP9 Design and Sustainability - Compliance Summary

The Design and Access Statement has been prepared to align with the requirements of Policy SP9 and the associated North Hertfordshire Masterplan Requirements guidance. The early chapters establish a clear understanding of the site and its context, followed by the vision and principles that shape the masterplan. Together, these sections demonstrate that the proposals have been developed in accordance with the expectations of the Local Plan and provide a robust foundation for the detailed elements of the hybrid application.

1. Introduction and Engagement

The purpose and status of the document are clearly set out on pages 5 - 6, confirming its role in supporting the hybrid planning application and outlining the scope of matters addressed. This section explains how the DAS brings together the design rationale, contextual analysis and technical evidence required by SP9.

Pages 7 - 9 summarise the engagement undertaken, including early discussions with local councillors, parish representatives and county officers, alongside a targeted SEN awareness campaign and a public consultation supported by a dedicated website. The consultation process is described in a structured and transparent way, demonstrating that the masterplan has been shaped by local feedback and that community views have informed the evolution of the proposals. This approach reflects the collaborative ethos expected by SP9.

2. Understanding the Place

A comprehensive appraisal of the site and its surroundings is presented on pages 11 - 21. This includes analysis of landscape and townscape character, local materials, cultural heritage, amenities and the historic development of Ickleford. The study identifies the defining characteristics of the area, including its rural setting, settlement pattern and relationship with the surrounding countryside.

The site's physical characteristics are documented in detail, including topography, vegetation, access points and public rights of way. Opportunities and constraints are clearly set out on page 21, covering landscape structure, ecological features, access considerations and technical matters such as drainage and utilities. This analysis provides the contextual foundation required by SP9 and directly informs the structure of the masterplan.

3. Vision and Placemaking Principles

The vision for Icknield Fields is described on page 31 as a landscape led extension to Ickleford that respects the village's rural character while meeting identified needs for homes, specialist education and community facilities. The vision is supported by a set of placemaking objectives on page 33, which respond directly to the contextual analysis and address character, connectivity, sustainability, biodiversity and community integration.

Pages 34 - 41 explain how the masterplan has evolved through option development and pre application discussions. This section demonstrates that the preferred approach has been selected following a structured design process, with clear consideration of policy alignment, placemaking quality and deliverability. This satisfies SP9's requirement for a transparent and iterative approach to masterplanning.

4. Land Use Structure

The land use framework is set out on page 42 and further illustrated through the hybrid masterplan on pages 52 & 53. The distribution of residential areas, the SEN school, sports facilities, green infrastructure and SuDS is clearly explained. The structure responds to the site's constraints and opportunities, reinforcing existing landscape features and establishing a coherent pattern of development that integrates with the village. This accords with SP9's requirement for a clear explanation of the amount and disposition of land uses.

5. Green Infrastructure and Landscape

Pages 43 & 44 present the green infrastructure framework, identifying the central green link, meadows, wetlands, play spaces and enhanced pedestrian and cycle routes. This establishes a connected and multifunctional landscape structure that supports recreation, biodiversity and sustainable drainage.

The landscape strategy on pages 102 - 108 sets out the structure of open spaces and planting, while the ecology strategy on page 109 describes baseline conditions, habitat retention and the approach to biodiversity net gain. These sections demonstrate that landscape and ecology have been embedded from the outset, with green infrastructure forming a core organising element of the masterplan. This approach aligns with SP9's emphasis on environmental enhancement and long term stewardship.

6. Movement and Access

The movement framework on pages 45 & 46 establishes a clear hierarchy of streets and routes, supported by improved pedestrian and cycle connections and safer crossings on Bedford Road. The proposals strengthen links to the village, improve access to public transport and enhance the wider rights of way network.

The access strategy on page 74 and the street hierarchy on pages 75 & 76 reinforce the approach to permeability and sustainable movement. These measures reflect SP9's requirement for integrated, accessible and sustainable transport networks and ensure that movement is considered as a core placemaking component rather than an afterthought.

7. Urban Design Framework

The urban design framework on page 47 sets out the spatial principles that guide the structure of the masterplan. These include block form, key frontages, gateways, views, edges and character areas. The framework ensures that the development responds to local distinctiveness and creates a coherent and legible place. This satisfies SP9's requirement for a strategic design approach prior to detailed design and provides a clear set of principles to guide future reserved matters applications.

8. Sustainability and Energy

The sustainability and energy framework on page 48 outlines the site wide approach to low carbon design, fabric performance, water management and long term resilience. These principles are embedded in the masterplan and will guide future detailed design stages. This aligns with SP9's sustainability objectives and demonstrates a commitment to delivering a resilient and energy efficient development.

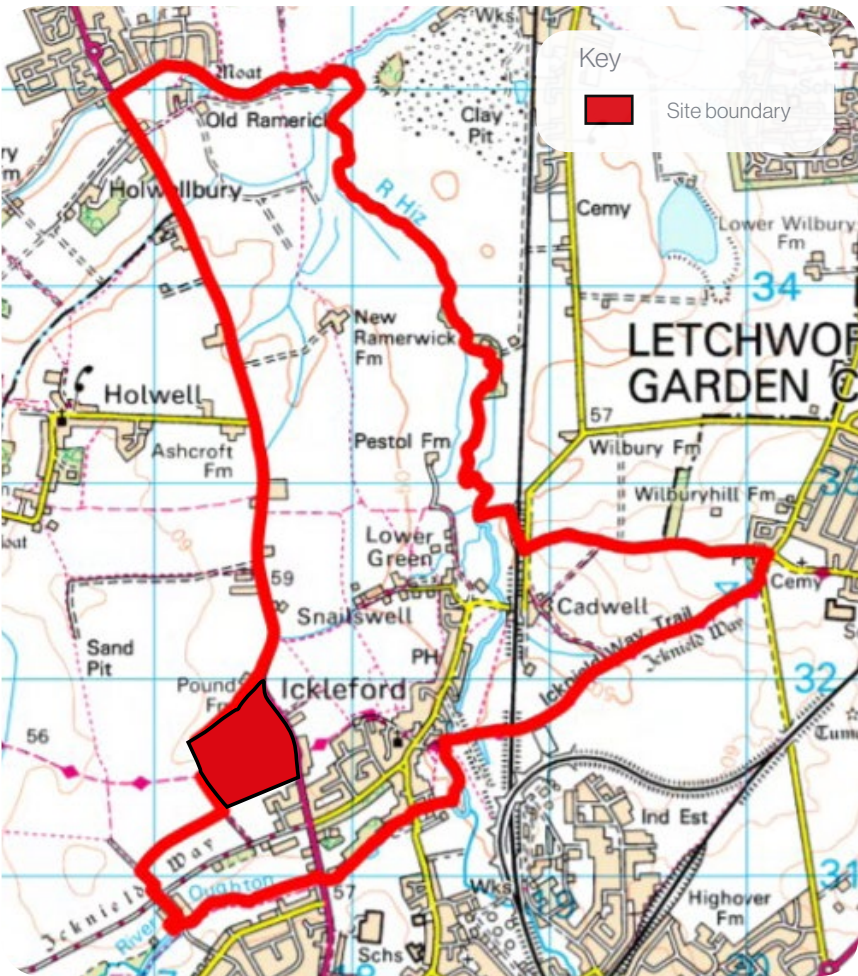
Summary

The initial chapters of the Design and Access Statement demonstrate that the proposals have been developed in full accordance with Policy SP9. The document provides a comprehensive understanding of the site, a clear vision and a structured set of masterplanning principles that respond to local character, landscape, movement and sustainability. This establishes a strong foundation for the detailed elements of the hybrid application and confirms that the scheme meets the expectations of the Local Plan.

Application of Local Policies

The Ickleford Neighbourhood Plan Policies apply to the application site.

The site falls within the Ickleford neighbourhood Plan Area as shown below:



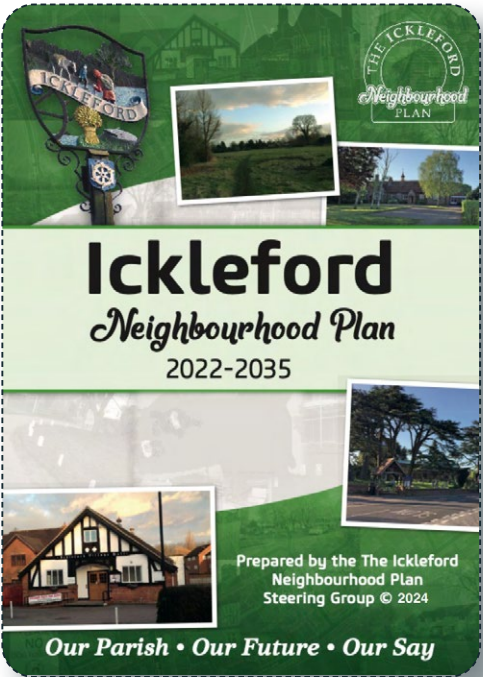
Ickleford Neighbourhood Plan Area

Application of Ickleford Neighbourhood Plan Policies

- SD1 – Settlement Boundary:
Site lies within the Ickleford Neighbourhood Plan area and adjoins the village edge. Development maybe acceptable in principle if it respects local character.
- SD2 – Housing Mix:
New homes should meet local needs, prioritising smaller dwellings (1–3 bed).
- SD3 – High-Quality Design:
Layout and architecture must follow INP Design Codes — 2-storey scale, traditional materials, green frontages, and integrated parking.
- SD4 – Energy Efficiency:
Buildings should incorporate sustainable design features such as solar orientation, EV charging, and renewable energy.
- SD5 – Water Management:
Use Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), permeable paving, and water-efficient fittings.
- E1 – Maintaining Separation:
Southern and western edges must retain landscape buffers to preserve separation from Hitchin and open countryside.
- E2 – Protecting the Landscape:
Retain hedgerows and mature trees; use native planting and soften site boundaries.
- E3 – Rural Character:
Design and layout should reflect the rural village form and avoid suburban appearance.
- E4 – Biodiversity:
Deliver at least 10 % biodiversity net gain with habitat enhancements and wildlife corridors.
- HE1 – Heritage:

Respect local historic context through scale, materials, and building form

- C1 / C2 – Community & Green Space:
Provide usable open space or play area and connect to existing green infrastructure.
- MTT1 – Movement:
Create safe pedestrian and cycle links to Bedford Road and existing paths.
- MTT2 – Parking:
Ensure sufficient off-street parking integrated into landscaping, with visitor and EV spaces.



Ickleford Neighbourhood Plan 2022-2035

National Design Guide

The proposed development aims to display good design and address fully the ten key characteristics set out in the National Design Guide – ensuring a efficient, suitable and sustainable development enhancing the local area.

The National Planning Policy Framework makes clear that creating high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. The National Design Guide illustrates how well-designed places that are beautiful, enduring and successful can be achieved in practice. It forms part of the Government's collection of planning practice guidance and should be read alongside the separate planning practice guidance on design process and tools.



1. Context

The development responds positively to its edge-of-settlement location, creating a clear transition between the existing village and surrounding countryside. Development is contained within a strong landscape framework, retaining key boundaries and reinforcing green edges to respect the rural setting.

2. Identity

The proposal is structured around a series of clearly defined character areas, streets and green spaces that create a distinctive and legible neighbourhood. The inclusion of an SEN school, sports facilities and a community green helps establish a strong and inclusive identity with civic presence.

3. Built Form

A varied yet coherent built form is proposed, with perimeter blocks, courtyard lanes and softer rural edges. Building heights, massing and layouts respond to adjacent uses, with more formal frontages addressing key routes and looser arrangements along landscape edges.

4. Movement

The layout prioritises walking and cycling through a network of active greenways and safe streets, linking homes, the school, sports facilities and open spaces. Vehicular access is clear and efficient, while shared surfaces and low-speed environments encourage safe movement throughout the site. The proposal is carefully integrated into the surrounding Public Footpath network, creating new active travel links.

5. Nature

A comprehensive landscape framework is integral to the scheme, including green buffers, attenuation features and connected open spaces. Biodiversity is enhanced through retained and new planting, green corridors and the integration of natural features within the neighbourhood structure.

6. Public Spaces

A hierarchy of high-quality public spaces is provided, including the Community Green, children's play areas, sports pitches and landscaped routes. These spaces are overlooked by surrounding development, supporting safety, usability and long-term community value.

7. Uses

The mix of uses supports a balanced and sustainable neighbourhood. Phase One delivers an SEN school, 3G pitch and 100 homes (50% affordable), with later phases introducing additional housing, a residential care home and expanded sports facilities, meeting a wide range of community needs.

8. Homes & Buildings

Homes are designed to support inclusive, adaptable living, with a range of dwelling types and tenures integrated across the site. Affordable housing is indistinguishable from market homes, and buildings are positioned to maximise outlook, daylight and privacy.

9. Resources

The scheme promotes efficient use of land and infrastructure, with phased delivery allowing services, landscape and community facilities to grow alongside development. Sustainable drainage, shared surfaces and compact block structures contribute to long-term efficiency.

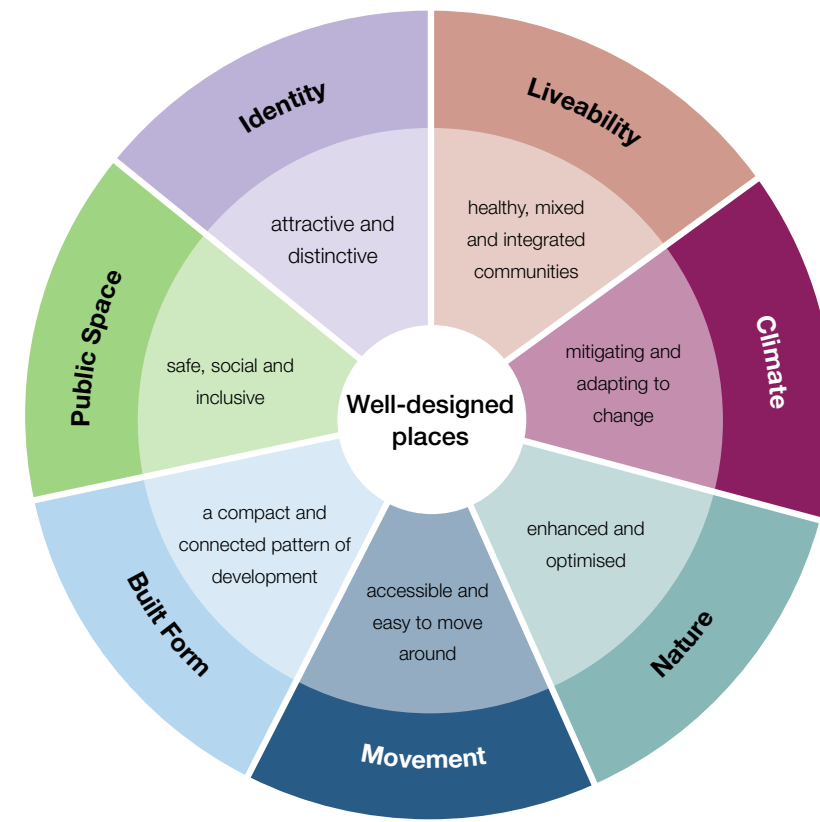
10. Lifespan

The development is designed to be resilient and adaptable over time. The phased approach allows the neighbourhood to evolve, with future sports facilities and open spaces strengthening long term community health, well-being and social value.

Design & Placemaking Planning Practice Guidance

The emerging Design and Placemaking Planning Practice Guidance promotes the creation of well-designed, inclusive and sustainable places that respond positively to their context.

It emphasises the importance of character, connectivity, landscape integration and high-quality public spaces, ensuring development supports healthy, walkable neighbourhoods with a strong sense of identity and long-term adaptability.



1. Liveability

The development delivers a balanced, inclusive neighbourhood with a mix of homes, affordable housing, education, care and sports facilities. Safe streets, accessible green space and phased delivery support everyday living and long term community well-being.

2. Climate

The layout supports climate resilience through integrated green infrastructure, sustainable drainage and a walkable neighbourhood structure that reduces reliance on the private car and supports low carbon lifestyles.

3. Nature

A strong landscape framework defines the site edges and internal green spaces, enhancing biodiversity, strengthening ecological connections and ensuring the development sits comfortably within its rural setting.

4. Movement

A clear hierarchy of streets, greenways and shared surfaces prioritises walking and cycling, connecting homes with the SEN school, sports facilities, open spaces and the wider settlement.

5. Built Form

Built form is varied and character-led, with perimeter blocks, courtyards and softer rural edges responding to context, adjacent uses and landscape, creating a coherent yet diverse townscape.

6. Public Space

A network of high-quality public spaces, including the community green, play areas and sports pitches, is well overlooked and integrated into the movement network to support social interaction and active lifestyles.

7. Identity

Distinct character areas, strong landscape structure and the inclusion of civic uses such as the school and sports facilities create a clear sense of place and a recognisable identity for Pound Farm.

North Hertfordshire's Green Belt

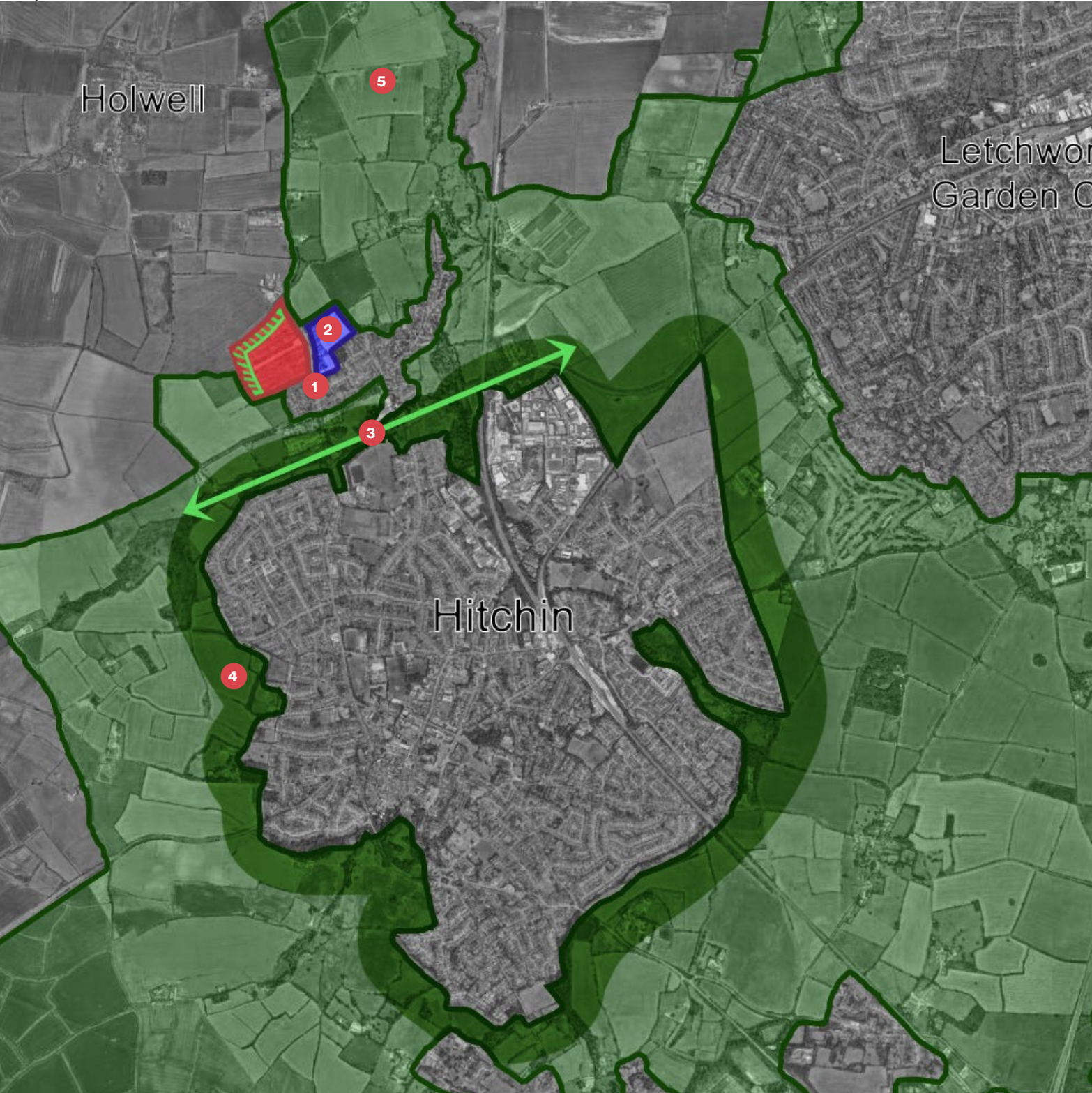
The purposes of North Hertfordshire's Green Belt are to prevent the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas, to prevent neighbouring towns from merging, and to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.

The NPPF states that development in the Green Belt should not be regarded as inappropriate where it would use Grey Belt land and would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan.

The proposed development has been designed to protect and strengthen the Green Belt through the provision of generous landscaped buffers to the northern and western edges, reinforcing historic field boundaries with the open countryside beyond. It will form a coherent extension to the village alongside the site allocation for 150 homes to the east of Bedford Road.

The site lies to the north of Ickleford and so does not breach the Green Belt between Hitchin and Ickleford, which serves an important purpose in maintaining the separation between settlements and preventing Hitchin's sprawl.

- 1 Site adjoins existing village of Ickleford
- 2 Proposed development forms a consistent northern extension to Ickleford alongside adjacent allocated site IC3 (150 homes)
- 3 Clear existing gap retained between Hitchin and Ickleford, in line with Ickleford Neighbourhood Plan Policy E1
- 4 Green Belt edge surrounding Hitchin remains intact, containing the sprawl of Hitchin into the open countryside / adjacent settlements
- 5 No impact on merging of towns to the north of Hitchin.



Land at Pound Farm

Vision & Placemaking

